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Africatown Fighting a Billion Dollar Company; Keep It In the Ground Cuts Climate Emissions

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March 5, 2018

*Critical information about the environment delivered weekly*



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*"Nature has introduced great variety into the landscape, but man has displayed a passion for simplifying it. Thus he undoes the built-in checks and balances by which nature holds the species within bounds." ~Rachel Carson*

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## Environmental News

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### **West Virginia Gas Companies Wined and Dined Lawmakers Before Scoring Favorable Fracking Legislation**

A country club luncheon. A \$130 steak dinner. A whiskey tasting. Dinner at an historic neo-Georgian mansion. These are just a few examples of the many occasions last year when oil and gas lobbyists wined and dined West Virginia state lawmakers on key committees that craft fossil fuel legislation. Lobbyists representing industry players including natural gas giant EQT, Antero Resources, TransCanada, and multiple oil and gas trade associations wooed state lawmakers with thousands of dollars' worth of food and drink throughout 2017, according to lobbying records obtained by [DeSmog](#).



In early 2018, just months after some of these fancy gatherings took place, most oil and gas companies got something they wanted: A “co-tenancy” bill, HB 4268, that allows these companies to drill for natural gas on private land with the consent of only 75 percent of the landowners. The powerful fossil fuel industry in the state often secures favorable treatment from politicians of both parties whom they lobby — and to whom their corporate political action committees donate. Investigate further with [Desmog Blog](#).

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## **'Keep It in the Ground' Approach to Fossil Fuels on US Public Lands Would Cut Climate Emissions, Study Confirms**



Limiting fossil fuel production on U.S. federal lands would reduce both global oil consumption and overall carbon emissions, according to a new study by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), a research organization focused on sustainable development. In the study, SEI researchers specifically examined the policies proposed in the “Keep It in the Ground Act,” which would ban new and renewed leases to extract oil, gas, and coal on all federal lands, and was introduced in Congress in 2015, 2016, and again in 2017.

“Our models show that each barrel of U.S. oil left undeveloped leads to about a half-barrel drop in global oil consumption,” said Pete Erickson, SEI senior scientist and study co-author. “In the long term, the smart choice — for the climate and the economy — is to phase down oil and gas production, not ramp it up.” Take a further look via [Desmog Blog](#)

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## **Africatown, a Small Historically Black Town Fighting a Billion Dollar Company That’s Devastating Its Community with Toxic Waste**

Today, this rich history, this still-proud community and these enduring descendants are now being threatened by toxic industrial waste and rising rates of cancer. Last spring, a suit was filed on behalf of 1200 Africatown residents against International Paper, which operated a paper plant for the better part



of the 20th century on land owned by the Meaher family. It claims the plant and its related facilities surrounding the town released highly toxic chemicals linked to cancer into the local environment in amounts far exceeding legal EPA limits. It further alleges

International Paper, a Memphis-based company that made over \$21 billion globally in sales in 2016 alone, violated federal regulations by failing to clean up the site before closing and bulldozing the plant in 2000, leaving chemicals to seep and spread into surrounding areas.

Given the toll on human lives — although no town-specific data exists, longtime residents report they are dying mostly from cancer before age 65 and a recent survey of 150 residents reported 100 of them or their local relatives had cancer — some believe such modern-day corporate malfeasance rivals that ill-intentioned wager made by Meaher more than a century and a half prior. Learn more about Africatowns historical context at [Atlanta Black Star](#)

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## **Crazy Floods Hit the Midwest When Hardly Anyone Was Looking**



Welcome to my hometown, Goshen, Indiana. The Maple City declared [a state of emergency](#) on Wednesday as unprecedented floodwaters swept into the streets and emergency crews [used boats to evacuate people from their homes](#).

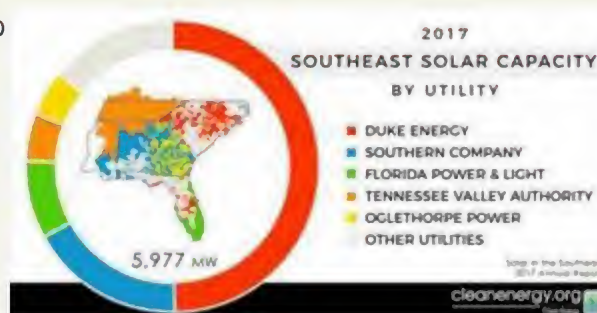
The rain came from a major storm system that [swept through the middle of the country](#) beginning [on Monday](#). Rivers have swelled from Texas to Michigan, closing roads, causing car accidents, and shutting down schools. And the rainfall isn't expected to stop completely until this weekend.

In northern Indiana, the storm dumped its warm rain on more than a foot of snow. With the ground frozen, there was nowhere for the rainfall and snowmelt to go — except into streets, parking lots, and homes. Goshen's outdoor pool was just about [the only dry spot around](#). Read more about Maple City at [Grist](#).

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## Solar in the Southeast: New Report Highlights Solar Data and Trends Throughout the Southeast

As solar energy development continues to expand in the Southeast, increasing almost 30 fold over the last five years, the growth patterns remain varied depending on specific location. The Solar in the Southeast 2017 Annual Report from Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE) was released today, highlighting solar data and trends throughout the region, including Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.



Using the metric “watts per customer,” which looks at the amount of installed solar relative to the total number of customers served, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy offers a unique analysis, with detailed information at the regional, state, and utility level. The watts-per-customer metric provides an unbiased standard by which utilities and states can be compared and contrasted. Learn more SACE’S report [here](#) and learn more about the press release at [Clean Energy Org.](#)

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## **Scientists Have Detected an Acceleration in Sea Level Rise**



In the study, the authors quantified what was causing the ocean waters to rise. Part of the rise is related to what’s called thermal expansion (warmer water is less dense so it expands). In the past, this was responsible for the majority of sea level rise. More recently, however, melting ice has contributed more and more to sea level rise.

Is this acceleration very important? The authors answer that question; they calculate that the acceleration will cause more than half of the sea level rise that will occur by the year 2100. Right now, sea levels are rising at a rate of about 3 mm per year. If that rate remained constant until the year 2100 (no acceleration), oceans would be about 25 cm higher than they are today. But a continued acceleration would cause a rise of 65 cm. So, this seemingly small acceleration makes a huge impact. Read more at [The Guardian](#).

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## Congressional Republicans Got F's on Their Environmental Report Cards

"We've seen the parties have gotten further and further apart," says Tiernan Sittenfeld, LCV's senior vice president for government affairs, "and more Democrats have recognized that good climate politics is good politics."



All those votes resulted in single-digit failing scores for most Republicans. The Senate average of 1 percent is a historic low, while House Republicans pulled an average of 5 percent. Meanwhile Democrats in the House and Senate earned 94 percent and 93 percent, respectively.

Those are just party averages, and it's worth noting just how many legislators are at the extremes, which tilts the scores: More than 100 Democrats, now leading the opposition to Trump's deregulatory agenda, earned perfect scores, while the Republican average was dragged down by the 170 lawmakers across the two chambers who earned a zero. Read more at [Grist](#).

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# 2018 Carolinas Climate Resilience Conference



**September 17 – 19, 2018**

**Columbia, SC**

“Conversations in the hall are often the best part of a conference. Presentations at the Carolinas Climate Resilience Conference are designed around alternative formats to allow for more discussion and interaction among all participants. The descriptions below share a bit of information about the different presentation formats. Please consider how these approaches can make helpful connections.”

Topics for discussion sessions may include Climate Science, Research, and Information in the Carolinas; Planning for Resilience, Coping with Climate, Sector-Specific Projects and Activities, and Climate Communications and Outreach. Get more information about the subcategories at [CISA](#).

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SEAC AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE OF UNC EXECUTIVE BRANCH  
PRESENT

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND AGRICULTURE SPEAKER SERIES

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Will Hendrick, Lawyer for the  
Waterkeeper Alliance  
March 5, 5:00 PM  
Carolina Union, Room 3205

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS

Naeema Muhammed, Director of the NC  
Environmental Justice Network, and Elizabeth  
Haddix, Civil Rights and Environmental  
Attorney  
March 21, 5:00 PM  
Carolina Union, Room 2420

## POLICY SOLUTIONS

David Price, US Representative  
March 27, 5:15 PM  
Carolina Union, Room 2420



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The Rachel Carson Council, founded in 1965, is the national environmental organization envisioned by Rachel Carson to carry on her work after her death. We promote Carson's ecological ethic that combines scientific concern for the environment and human health with a sense of wonder and reverence for all forms of life in order to build a sustainable, just, and peaceful future.

Over the years we at RCC have been devoted to providing you the public with important, timely information about the environment. RCC exists because of donations from individuals like you.

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**Our mailing address is:**

Rachel Carson Council, Inc.  
8600 Irvington Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20817

[office@rachelcarsoncouncil.org](mailto:office@rachelcarsoncouncil.org)

[www.rachelcarsoncouncil.org](http://www.rachelcarsoncouncil.org)